DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 041 ?82 EA 002 940

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TITLE Four-Quarter School Year. Results of an Exploratory Study of the Four-Quarter School Year in Metropolitan Atlanta.
INSTITUTION Supplementary Educational Center, Atlanta, Ga.
PUB DATE [69]
NOTE 44p.

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$2.30
DESCRIPTORS Community Leaders, Educational Change, Educational Disadvantagement, Educational Improvement, *Evaluation, *Extended School Year, Principals, Quarter System, *Research, Student Opinion, Superintendents, *Surveys, Teacher Attitudes

ABSTRACT

Six Atlanta, Georgia, school systems initiated a four-quarter school year program in 1968-69. An exploratory study was conducted to develop procedures and instruments for a comprehensive examination of the plan. Strong support exists in all groups interviewed -- superintendents and steering committee members, students, parents, teachers, principals, and community influentials -- for continuation of the program. According to those interviewed, the four-quarter plan increases flexibility and uses human resources and physical facilities more efficiently. There is also basic agreement on perceived changes needed, reasons for changes, and possible advantages or disadvantages of the program. (Appendix and figure 5 on page 31 may reproduce poorly because of marginal legibility). (Author/RA)

ED041382

FOUR-QUARTER-SCHOOL-YEAR

results of an exploratory study of the four-quarter school year in METROPOLITAN ATLANTA

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FOREWORD

Six school systems in metro Atlanta jointly cooperate in a Supplementary Educational Center. Primarily this Center is maintained to facilitate cooperative planning and activities. One such cooperative action is known as the Four-Quarter School Year. Although the Center was nonexistent when the ideas originated and mushroomed from one man's interest into an eight school system metro concern, it has provided a forum and accomplished some of the leg work.

Approximately 300,000 children are enrolled in the public schools of metro Atlanta—some 75,000 of these in secondary grades. They represent nearly 1/3 of all the secondary school children in the State of Georgia. The six school systems cooperating directly through the Center service nearly 200,000 of the total and some 65,000 of the secondary students. Most secondary students and their school programs have been involved in the first year of the Four-Quarter implementation.

Recently, the Center has completed an exploratory study—exploratory in the sense of identifying requisite procedures and instrumentation to undertake a comprehensive study at the end of the seventh quarter of implementation in March of 1970. Information has been collected from superintendents, Steering Committee members, teachers and principals, students, parents, and influential community leaders. Information has been summarized in the belief that it should have some relevance in understanding the reasons for the new organizational plan, changes reflected as implementation has progressed, and the initial comprehension of and reaction to the changes. This publication summarizes information gathered in May and June 1969, after only three quarters in the new organizational plan. Results should not be generalized beyond the limitations stated in the procedural narrative.

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FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

Just what does the four-quarter plan mean to business, school, and community opinion makers. What is it—what does it do? What are the advantages—the disadvantages? Is it a good idea? How well is the implementation progressing? What is known from other sources?

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The school calendar in American education is by no means a constant or unchanging tradition. In agricultural sections of the country, school schedules were originally planned to release children for farm work in the late spring, summer, and fall. In most large cities, prior to 1840, school extended throughout the year.

Through the years, the American school calendar underwent a double metamorphosis: the rural areas gradually added instruction time, and the urban areas gradually added vacation time. By 1951, most school districts in the United States were providing a school term of nine months. This nine months' term generally ran from early fall—immediately before or after Labor Day—to late spring. During the period in which the general nine months' term was evolving, many people looked at this school calendar critically. Criticism included points about the financial folly involved in having public buildings idle for one-third of a year. Other critics waxed on the valuable time lost from instruction. Regardless of the major peeves of specific critics, the fact remained that much of the educational profession as well as the American public was questioning the value of the nine months' term.

SUGGESTED SOLUTION

As school boards and superintendents looked for alternatives to the nine months' term, one basic proposal proved to be the most consistent: extending the school year. This suggestion has, through the years and various experiments, taken on several shapes and forms: The All-Year School, the Extended School Year, the Tri-Mester Plan, the Four-Quarter Plan, and the Modified Summer School Program. All of these plans have identifiable differences as well as one specific similarity—in one way or another, they extend or expand the school year from nine months to a longer period of time.

The motives behind these different plans are as varied as the plans themselves. Extended School Year plans generally provide for lengthening the regular school year of 180 days to 200 days or eleven months. Many extended year plans provide this lengthened year on a volunteer basis; that is, students and teachers do not have to participate unless they so desire. Others, however, have required that all students and all teachers participate. Additional educational opportunities available through the longer year certainly figure in the major advantages. The possibility of financial savings through year-round utilization of school buildings and by graduating students earlier, thereby lightening the educational burden, are prominent in extended school year plans.

Another version of the lengthened school year is the four-quarter plan. This proposal suggests a forty-eight-week year divided into four equal quarters. Out of these four quarters students would be required to attend only three, and teachers would be employed for three or four quarters. There are, of course, many variations of this four-quarter plan—three equal periods rather than four, staggered vacation times or general vacation times.

The extended school year has been the subject of many feasibility studies throughout the country with a range of programs which runs the gamut from short scheduling modules of two to four weeks to a full eleven-month year. Throughout the country, these plans have been studied, adopted, and—in many cases—abandoned. The failure of the plans to produce the goals set by each of these programs have common points.

- Year-round or extended school year operation does not save money. Quite the reverse, it is usually more expensive.
- There was a lack of public support and understanding of the venture and the things the extended school year was supposed to produce.
- Regimenting students and teachers to attendance patterns over which they had no choice or to which they felt no commitment was an apparent problem.

However, the extended school year still figures importantly in the literature of education. It is still proposed as a means of building additional quality into school problems, of meeting space and manpower demands, of tooling up the educational opportunities to meet the demands of the time.

Recent feasibility studies have revealed new possibilities for the extended school year —particularly in the area of program improvement. For example, the Florida Educational Research and Development Council recently conducted a study for the Polk County Schools. The study suggested that if the Board wished to make major changes and could approve the additional costs involved, the 210 day year was recommended. The primary purpose of this plan was to increase quality, not reduce expenditures. Sequoia Union High School District, Redwood City, California, in a 1960 study reported that an extended school year would indeed cost more money. A 1954 report from Los Angeles City School District presented three alternate calendars: a Tri-Mester Plan, a Four-Quarter Plan, and a Modified Summer Program. Considered too costly, too much resisted by the public, and full of administrative problems, the plan was abandoned in Los Angeles.

Time after time, report after report indicated that no economies would be realized, but that educational advantages could be bought by changing to an extended school year in one form or another. The Polk County, Florida, study very distinctly makes this point: If the Board of Education wishes to make better use of its school plants and school personnel than is at present practiced, and the Board is also willing to adopt a plan which will involve major changes in the curriculum, enrichment, and acceleration policies, it will adopt a plan which will operate all schools for 210 days to provide continuous study for all pupils, provide one additional year of enriching study in the elementary grades and graduate one year early in secondary school.

Often in educational circles when the topic of the extended school year is raised, the automatic response is "They tried it in Aliquippa." Indeed they did. Aliquippa reported a total savings of $285,059 for a seven-year period during 1928-1938. Consequently, the plan did achieve the financial gain that was anticipated. Other problems led to its failure: maintenance and remodeling were major problems, students and parents apparently preferred the summer months for vacation times, while teachers preferred to vacation throughout the year. These problems, among other administrative tangles, resulted in the Aliquippa schools abandoning the program.

As many as thirty programs have been tried in the United States from the early 1900's to date. They have been abandoned. The idea, however, has never been abandoned and is currently under consideration in several major cities as a means of extending educational opportunities.

A REPEATED THEME

Thornton Wilder, one of America's most interesting playwrights, had a similar experience in regard to his play, THE MATCHMAKER. When first produced it was a mild success. Its movie version in the late 50's was so bad it almost insured the death of several show business careers. Yet, when David Merrick—of Broadway fame and infamy—took another look at THE MATCHMAKER and wrought some of his magic, one of the longest running plays on Broadway emerged—HELLO, DOLLY!

The on and off interest in the extended school year is a similar phenomenon. Recent studies suggest that with a different staging the extended school year may well be an important solution to the problem of providing educational opportunities designed to meet the needs of today and tomorrow.

The controversy over the value of the extended school year, the four-quarter plan, the modified summer school program is a very quiet, yet apparent difference of opinion. Advocates of the plan promote advantages such as year-round educational opportunities, constant utilization of public buildings and facilities, year-round employment of teachers and other professionals. Those who oppose the extended school year cry that constant school leaves no time for planning and study, no time for relaxing and rejuvenating away from the school setting. An objective view of both sets of claims—the pros and the cons—brings to light legitimate points in both of the arguments.

In a recent resolution, the American Association of School Administrators stated:

> We urge an extended school year for all pupils. There is now more to teach and to learn than can be accomplished with a high quality in the present time allotment. The alternative is a limited curriculum. To meet the educational needs today, but especially of tomorrow, requires an expanded curriculum, a curriculum of depth and breadth . . . .

FOUR-QUARTER YEAR - METRO ATLANTA

Hearsay credits Doug MacRae of the Fulton County System with a long-time interest in extended school year plans. A few years back, the Atlanta City Schools and Fulton County Schools studied the possibilities of saving money through better use of buildings in a four-quarter or extended school plan. The conclusions of their study stated that savings would not be realized on buildings and maintenance over the long term. Renewed interest in extended school year plans in the 1960's has focused on educational advantage rather than economic advantage.

In 1965, the Atlanta Area Teacher Education Service agreed to underwrite the cost of a metropolitan conference on current pertinent educational topics. A committee including Lucille Sessions, Decatur City; George Griffin, Marietta City; Doug MacRae, Fulton County; John Martin, Curtis Henson, and Jimmy Fain, Atlanta City; and Lynn Shufelt, AATES, suggested that a conference be held to consider the high school curriculum. A principals' committee was set up to plan the conference—Reid Gillis from Fulton County; Ed Thompson, Cleveland Denard, Roger Derthick, and Claude Wills from Atlanta; S. M. Prosser from Decatur; and George Griffin from Marietta were among its membership. This committee planned a conference to look at the high school curriculum and other areas of concern. The conference was held at the Center for Continuing Education at the University of Georgia. The basic program included flexible scheduling, computer utilization, individualized instruction and the extended school year. Speakers included Dr. James Kenney of the University of Georgia; Dr. Andy Holt of the University of Tennessee; and Dr. B. Frank Brown of Melbourne High School, Cocoa Beach, Florida.

A series of follow-up meetings hosted by superintendents and attended by superintendents and principals resulted in the decision to establish a committee to plan action following the conference. Dr. Paul West, host at the session, appointed a committee to work on the question of the four-quarter school year. The committee eventually recommended that the metro area look at the four-quarter possibilities, and the metro superintendents accepted that recommendation.

A second major conference was planned. At this particular meeting, again at the Continuing Center in Athens, the topic focused on the four-quarter school system and its implications for the curricular areas. Reid Gillis of Fulton was the Master of Ceremonies, and participants included supervisors, principals, and coordinators from the metro systems. Small committees explored the impact of four-quarter within individual subject areas.

Following the second Athens conference, a Steering Committee was set up in the formal sense. Each superintendent appointed members to the committee, and the committee was charged with the planning responsibility, with ultimate decisions resting with superintendents and boards of education.

Steering Committee planning operations included the establishment and coordination of a group of discipline study committees. A twelve or thirteen member subject area chairman committee reported directly to the Steering Committee. The thirteen committee chairmen—one or more from each system—coordinated inter-system discipline planning committees* with at least seven members on each committee. These committee members represented all the systems included and were the chairmen of intra-school system discipline committees.

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*Disciplines included the following: art, business education, English, home economics, industrial arts, language, mathematics, music, physical education, science, social science, and vocational education.

In contrast to earlier programs, the metropolitan Atlanta efforts centered on the four-quarter school year as a way of organizing the high school calendar to provide year-round educational opportunities with a flexible schedule. Emphasis was on offering to every student a program designed to meet his individual needs by providing for:

- regular instruction
- enrichment opportunities
- remedial work
- exploratory opportunities.

Educational quality, not economic savings, served as the focus of efforts.

The inter- and intra-system committees met during the 1966-67 school year, discussed what had come out of the Athens principals' meeting and began serious work in planning the curriculum revision to be undertaken in the secondary schools. A serious attempt was made to limit the number of prerequisites and to free units or courses so they could stand on their own without any inherent sequential order.

PLAN OF THE EXPLORATORY STUDY

As the four-quarter organization progressed through the first year of operation during the school year 1968-69, educators in metropolitan Atlanta expressed interest in what was happening in their own and other school systems. Generally, questions indicated interest in what was being done currently and what was planned for the immediate future. Other questions related to the attitude of those who had been most directly affected by the organizational change: the school staff, the students, and the parents of students. In an effort to find answers to these questions and information regarding the state of implementation, the Supplementary Educational Center of metro Atlanta agreed to conduct a survey regarding the status of the implementation of the four-quarter school year and the attitudes that had developed toward it.

Drs. Ralph Kimbrough and Michael Nunnery of the School of Education, University of Florida, both having wide experience in educational surveys, were retained as advisors. Personal interviews and questionnaires were selected as techniques to reach the groups to be surveyed. Various sampling procedures were discussed; in the pilot study statistically defensible methods were not as crucial as trial of procedures and some initial feedback. Steering Committee members and superintendents of the metro school systems were interviewed individually to establish a base of information. Two staff members from Georgia State University were retained to interview the superintendents; Center staff members interviewed Steering Committee members. Teachers and principals, students, and parents were surveyed by questionnaires developed from the base information. Influential citizens were contacted and interviewed personally.

The primary intent of both methods was to determine what selected individuals thought to be the reasons for instituting the four-quarter system, the advantages and disadvantages the system offers, and attitudes toward the system. The survey was planned as a pilot, to be followed by comprehensive study during the 1969-70 school year.

Design of Pilot Study

I. Review of the Literature

II. Information Gathering Interviews
- Superintendents
- Steering Committee

III. Development of Instruments
- Interview Guides
- Questionnaires

IV. Administration of Questionnaires
- Parents
- Students
- Teachers
- Principals

V. Interviews of Community Influentials

VI. Compilation and Analysis of Data

VII. Plans for Full-Scale Study

Figure 1

Interviews for Information

Following a review of literature pertaining to the four-quarter school year, emphasizing what had been written regarding metro school systems, an interview schedule was constructed for interviews with the Steering Committee and superintendents. Membership of the Committee included professional personnel in the eight metro systems and the State Department of Education. The schedule focused on the reasons for changing to the quarter system, the advantages the system offered, how it was to be coordinated, the schedule of changes to be made, and how the public was to be informed about the implementation.

Questionnaires

Information gained from the interviews was used to develop a bank of questions regarding the four-quarter system. Three similar questionnaires were constructed for school staffs, students, and the parents of students (Appendix), designed in each case to elicit responses regarding observations of the four-quarter system as it was operating—the changes that had occurred, the advantages and disadvantages that were apparent to the respondents, why they thought the system was being used, and their attitude about it. In addition, parents were asked for their sources of information about the four-quarter system.

Six of the eight metro school systems have initiated the four-quarter school year—two are still in the planning stages. Four* of the six are included in the pilot study. Administrative personnel in each system assisted the Center in identifying schools in their respective systems from which a sample could be drawn. Homeroom groups in the schools were used as sample units because of the generally heterogeneous makeup of the groups. Principals handled the administrative details of distributing and collecting the questionnaires within their respective schools and also selected the homeroom groups used for the sample. Homeroom groups in grades nine through twelve were selected for the sample of parents—the students were asked to take the questionnaires to their parents and return the completed forms. The student sample was drawn from the eleventh or twelfth grades, again using homeroom groups. The rationale for using these two grade levels was that their experience in both the semester and quarter system would perhaps make them more aware of any changes which might have occurred. All teachers in the school selected for sampling were asked to respond to the professional questionnaire. Selected samples of teachers were drawn from all other secondary schools.

At a later date all principals were asked to respond to a professional questionnaire and were also asked to provide factual information related to the quarter courses offered in their respective schools and the number of students enrolled in the courses.

Interviews with Influentials

Seven of the eight metro school systems participated in the procedures for interviews with influential citizens. The procedures were based on Kimbrough's** power structure study techniques. The superintendents in each system were asked to name several citizens representing various walks of life who were influential in the affairs of their community. Those named by the superintendents were then interviewed by trained

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*Gwinnett, Decatur, Clayton, and Atlanta.

**Dr. Ralph Kimbrough, Chairman, Department of Educational Administration, University of Florida.

interviewers and were, in addition, asked to identify persons whom they considered most influential in community affairs. Those most frequently identified were interviewed. This procedure gives three levels of influential citizens: a small group named by nearly all those interviewed; a second and larger group named very frequently; a third group, the largest, which is mentioned often, but not as frequently as those in the other two groups.

Treatment of Data

Summaries were prepared of interview responses and of open-ended responses on questionnaires. Frequencies and percentages were computed for questionnaire items. Sophisticated analyses were not attempted as the exploratory or pilot nature of the study and unregulated sampling procedures prohibited rigorous inspection.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

INTERVIEWS
superintendents and steering committee

Personal interviews were conducted with superintendents or their representatives and Steering Committee members from all systems except Fulton County. The following questions were asked:

Interview Guide

Superintendents—Steering Committee

1. What were the reasons behind the organizational change?
2. What are possible advantages?
3. What were the planning procedures?
4. What major changes are anticipated?
5. What is the state of implementation?
6. What kind of information program is planned or underway?

Figure 2

The major purpose of this phase of the study was the collection of information from which to construct instruments and interview guides. Since no one person who was interviewed was given any more structure than the preceding questions, the responses are generally those which came to mind easily. For this reason, no quantitative treatment was used in dealing with the results of these interviews. RATHER, EVERY ANSWER GIVEN WAS ADDED TO A LIST, AND A COMPOSITE ANSWER CONSTRUCTED—A COMPOSITE WHICH REFLECTS NOT THE ATTITUDE OF INDIVIDUALS OR SYSTEMS, BUT OF THE METROPOLITAN PLANNERS.

Reasons for Organizational Change

Four major themes were present in the answers to this query:

- Inflexible and limited nature of present nine-months' term.

  The existent system was considered too inflexible—a lock-step in a fluid society. The process of education is continuous and not a "September to June operation"; "the nine-month plan is not adequate and does not offer enough opportunities or alternatives for the student."

- Need for curriculum reorganization.

  Textbook orientation was not accomplishing individualization of instruction; the increase in knowledge made it difficult operating in the old organizational structure, and the breadth and the depth of the school program was limited for most students. The four-quarter study would provide an incentive for reorganization and would make possible the addition of more relevant material and approaches and the deletion of irrelevant material and approaches.

- Need for regular program during summer.

  Approximately twenty-five per cent of the metro secondary students attend summer school; eighty per cent of this group take other than remedial work.

- Practicality of financing.

  School buildings are idle one-fourth of the year, and professional teachers are essentially on a part-time basis in a nine-month term. The four-quarter plan offers the possibility of better business practices and better resource use.

Expected Advantages

The major expected advantages fell in four areas: revised curriculum, flexibility and alternatives, needs of current social climate, and full-time nature of education.

Revised curriculum

Curriculum revision comments encompassed four major areas: reorganization and refinement of content, flexibility in course selection, tailored educational programs, and increased job opportunities.

Reorganization and refinement of content forced all subject fields to evaluate, add, delete, and/or rewrite where needed. Revision made possible a wider offering of courses.

Flexibility and alternatives

The four-quarter plan has the capability of offering flexibility not available in other organizational patterns. Each quarter stands as an autonomous unit; therefore, subject matter can often be scheduled without regard to sequence. Greater diversification is possible in the curriculum providing additional oppotunity to meet the range of student needs. Opportunity is available for enrichment, as well as for remediation. Subject areas can be offered in small parcels with a quickened pace for students and teachers. Flexibility of course selection includes the possibility of youngsters having work experience through co-op programs regardless of their future school plans. There is, in effect, an ungrading of the high school. Items suggesting flexibility included:

1. Programs can be better tailored for individuals.
2. Students can obtain a broader base of knowledge.
3. More depth is possible in areas of interest.
4. There is more opportunity for remedial or make-up work.
5. Students can complete requirements and go to college earlier if they wish.
6. Students are able to take skill courses or other enrichment.
7. Failing students have an immediate opportunity to drop or repeat courses.
8. Poor students do not have to be lost from the very first of the year.

The Four-Quarter organization increases job opportunities by allowing the optional, staggered vacations. All students would not be competing for the same job in the same term; they could choose to stay out of school and work

when the greatest number of jobs might be available. This organization should prove of benefit to those students who are interested in doing advanced training and who would like opportunity for practical experience while in high school.

- Needs of the current social climate

The current social climate demands greater return from the tax dollar, better utilization of buildings and facilities, alleviation of the problem of all the children on the streets during the summer months, possibility for recycling vacations and work schedules, revision of other approaches to graduation requirements, and assistance in easing the transition of a mobile population from school to school. The quarter system is a concept understood by the people, makes it possible to tie in more closely with the colleges and universities, and encourages staggered college entrance by having graduation at the end of any quarter. Furthermore, it is anticipated with schools in session the year around that vandalism will lessen.

Full-time nature of education

The job of educating modern youth is a full-time effort. The four-quarter approach makes it possible to give teachers a regular work year resulting in additional salary—if they choose.

Employment of a year-round nature may attract more men in the field. The additional time means that more time can be used for system and individual curriculum development and that quarters other than the summer can be used by the teachers for in-service or college courses. With its breadth and depth flexibility, it is expected that the four-quarter organization will make possible greater use of special competences of teachers, the use of part-time teacher personnel in the communities, and that the teacher will become more important in the counseling role related to student subject matter choices.

Coordination of Planning

Metropolitan—Planning and coordination of the four-quarter school year included all systems in the metro area because of the inter-relationships—proximity, mobile pupil populations, and location of parent jobs. An overall Steering Committee was, therefore, necessary to coordinate the planning functions. The purposes of the Steering Committee—as identified by the interviewees—are as follows:

- To plan and pass on information to the school systems.
- To set up organizational machinery to carry on planning operation—set up committees and hear their reports.
- To discuss implementation procedures.
- To act as a liaison group wherein the systems were to keep in touch regarding what each was doing to implement the four-quarter system.
- To identify areas where systems needed consistent agreement and action and things NOT to do in common.
- To initiate investigations and recommend action to the superintendents.
- To make policies and decisions with simple checking support from the superintendents.

Information available to the Center staff indicates that the Steering Committee agreed to move into the four-quarter, set up discipline committees, exchange ideas and information, work on the development of course numbering systems, and identify the administrative arrangements for equal quarters. While there is no report of formal action, the committee heard reports of curriculum committees. The perception of the Steering Committee role of those interviewed included the following:

1. Systems were free to use information passed down by the Steering Committee as they saw fit.
2. Steering Committee was seen as an advisory group.
3. Steering Committee was not able to bind individual systems through its decisions.

Curriculum committees on an inter-system basis were established at two levels:

1. A reporting body made up of the chairman of each of the discipline areas.
2. The inter-system committee in an actual discipline.

The membership of these inter-system discipline committees was two participants from each school system. The committees worked on subject matter, purposes, and objectives of courses. The following comments illustrate the range of perceptions regarding the committees:

- The committees were not very effective.
- Members of the Steering Committee had different concepts as to its power and function.
- The Steering Committee gave loose instructions to its curriculum committees and other work groups.

Within Systems—Those interviewed emphasized the systems' freedom to implement the four-quarter as they saw fit. Each system set up its own requirements while trying to

follow the Steering Committee recommendations. One system reported that implementation was strictly on a system-wide basis, while another system reported a structure wherein the superintendents, principals, and department heads formed committees to work on implementation. Another system formed executive system-wide committees to decide what should be included in the quarters.

Specific tasks reported as undertaken within the systems included setting up the calendar for the fourth quarter, establishing committees to study subject areas involving teachers in each system, operating the system curriculum committees to involve parents and pupils in the development of a course numbering system.

Within Schools—School committees were set up by some schools which worked on registration procedures, curriculum development, calendar development, grade and progress reporting, and design of the schedule. Progress varied within individual schools, ranging from implementation near completion to no within school provision, all planning being collective on a system-wide basis, to nothing being done in some schools. The extent of implementation within a school in some systems was left to the principal.

Anticipated Changes

Major changes were anticipated in organization of the curriculum, extra-curricular activities, administrative organization, and pupil personnel services.

- Organization of the curriculum.

  Interviewees identified the following anticipated changes in curriculum organization: redesigning on a quarter system; cutting out the dead wood; adding more current knowledge; implementing better teaching procedures; better organizing guides for content areas; providing a more flexible course structure—student can immediately recycle failed work; granting credit on a quarter basis; rewriting textbooks because of changing concepts; and planning and reorganizing of the curriculum.

The realignment of prerequisites with their abolition where possible and the retooling of many teachers and their approaches were considered significant advances in the area of curriculum.

- Extra-curricular activities.

  Extra-curricular activity comments ranged from "They will not be greatly affected until the program is statewide" to "Many will be scheduled as regular parts of the curriculum." The sports which are more appropriate for the summer term would increase opportunities for participation and

spread activities throughout the year. The revision of athletic eligibility rules is a necessity; students are expected to attend the terms in which they participate in an activity.

- Administrative Organization

  Expected administrative changes concerned records, financing, and work load.

  1. Four-quarter was seen as a determinant of full-time employment for principals.
  2. Principals and central office staff were particularly involved in planning.
  3. There would be more work for administrators and counselors during registration.
  4. Due to the lack of state aid at the present time, the regular staff would have to modify and maintain new record-keeping systems.
  5. State financing was required for success by making a tuition-free summer school available.
  6. The school days would be organized in quarters.
  7. Scheduling changes would come more frequently.

- Pupil Services

  Expected changes listed by interviewees included the following: guidance function would probably change for both teacher and counselor; registration will become more involved; greater proportion of the student body can gain work experience; the school can be extended into the community to work with business and industry; personnel will have more time with students; and there will be complications in record keeping, particularly reporting daily attendance.

State of Implementation

Two facets of implementation were treated—the achieved and the near-complete.

Responses to the personal interviews revealed that the four-quarter plan is underway in many schools in the metropolitan area. The meaning of underway includes curriculum revised and new courses offered, materials reorganized, high schools on four-quarter plan, courses divided into quarter units, calendar divided into four parts, and reporting and graduation changes. Contacts have been made with accrediting agencies, state department of education, and other legal and quasi-legal bodies to inform of the experimental organizational plan and to gain support of such a plan. Members of the Legislature have been approached individually and in groups to inform them of the plan.

One interviewee summarized the evidences which teachers, administrators, and counselors should be able to recognize in the four-quarter plan as follows:

Changes in . . .	Presence of . . .
Calendar	New course guides
Credit	In-service
Graduation requirements	Variety of course offerings
Course descriptions	Increased counseling role for teacher
Records and reporting	Greater depth and breadth of offerings
Registration	Individually planned schedules
Prerequisites	

Expectations of additional visible signs in the 1969-1970 school year include continued curriculum revision, more involvement of students in actual revision, possible changes in the flexibility of the bell schedule, continued records and form revision (including report cards), variety in school staffing methods, changed salary schedules, more extensive intramural programs, especially during the summers, and those changes related to refinement of the initial changes.

Several comments were related to the lack of state financing. Two school systems underwrote the cost of its entire fourth quarter for the 1969 summer, whereas other systems in the metro area in the four-quarter plan operated under varied levels of tuition. Most comments about the falling short of full implementation were related to the lack of finances. Some of those interviewed thought they were further along than expected in implementing, whereas others felt that they had fallen short.

The two most thoroughly discussed items in the active planning stage are a comprehensive study of progress in the four-quarter program and plans to get the four-quarter organizational package into the elementary schools.

Information Programs

Information programs basically utilized news media, PTA, and voter groups. Newspapers, television, newsletters from schools, special meetings, and civic club meetings were all listed by those interviewed. Individual members of the Steering Committee at various times spoke to groups in the metro area on a regional basis. Outside of the region, national periodicals have recently included articles about one or more of the school systems involved in the four-quarter plan. The Chamber of Commerce education committee was utilized. Information sheets were prepared for students, and student handbooks were revised by individual school administrations.

Reflections

When asked about initial attitude and present attitude related to the four-quarter program, the superintendents and Steering Committee members tended to be much more in favor of the idea presently than they were initially. Even in the beginning, however, most thought that the plan had merit, deserved study, and should be given a chance. The one person who reported feeling dubious at the beginning reported more positive feelings now that the program is being implemented.

QUESTIONNAIRES
students

Six hundred and six students completed and returned questionnaires, representing about half of those distributed and approximately 1 and 1/2 per cent of the secondary students in the four participating systems. Forty-nine per cent of the sample were juniors and 53 per cent were girls. Questionnaires were distributed through eleventh and twelfth grade rooms selected by principals in the exploratory study high schools. Items in the instrument were classified as Reasons, Possible Advantages, Possible Disadvantages, Changes, and Personal Feelings. (Complete instrument and response percentages appear in the Appendix.)

- Reasons

Eight items received majority support from students as reasons for the change to a four-quarter organization.

17.	Better selection of courses	(75%)
16.	Graduate sooner	(72%)
6.	A complete school program in the summer	(68%)
9.	Program suited to each	(63%)
19.	Encourage to stay in school	(58%)
18.	Reach individual interests	(55%)
3.	Update school studies	(52%)
2.	Better use of buildings	(52%)

Three factors having strong support were:

11.	Limit student failure to one quarter	(43%)
8.	Fewer students in school at one time	(43%)
20.	Graduate and enter college any quarter	(39%)

Only 11 per cent thought the "public wanted the plan."

- Possible Advantages

Although a four-point scale was utilized, data are reported here only as respondents agreed or disagreed. Substantial agreement was recorded on the following advantages:

9.	Complete requirements and graduate earlier	(84%)
2.	Better chance to make up failure	(79%)
11.	Greater choice of courses	(77%)
13.	Course failure only one quarter	(77%)
4.	More chances for enrichment	(75%)
15.	Better suited program to individual needs	(73%)
17.	Teachers can be assigned by special competences	(71%)
14.	Chance of part-time employment improved	(69%)
5.	New courses	(68%)
16.	Better suited to individual interests	(65%)
12.	Alternative for summer	(63%)
3.	Better opportunity to take remedial work	(62%)
11.	Graduate at any quarter	(62%)
10.	Maintain interest better in quarters	(58%)

The poorest percentage for any other item was a strong rating—41 per cent.

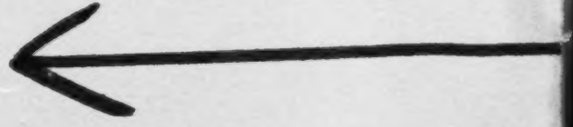
- Possible Disadvantages

Ratings are reported in terms of student agreement or disagreement with items as a disadvantage. Only one item—too little student understanding of the four-quarter plan (63%)—received majority opinion that it was a disadvantage. "Too many registrations" received strong support (38%).

- Possible Changes

Six choices were awarded majority support by the "check if true" approach:

1.	Reporting periods changed	(81%)
17.	Failures limited to one quarter	(61%)
2.	Better chance to make up failures	(60%)
13.	More freedom to select courses	(59%)
16.	Alternative for summer	(51%)
19.	Select courses by interest	(50%)



parents

Principals in the sample high schools distributed parent questionnaires through selected homerooms. Eight hundred and eighty-three parents returned completed instruments, approximately 40 per cent of those distributed. Parents were asked to check Reasons for Change, Advantages, Disadvantages, Personal Feelings, and Information Sources. (Complete instruments and response percentages appear in the Appendix.)

- Reasons for Change

Only four of the 20 suggested reasons received majority support and very few alternative suggestions were received (total of 27 "other" responses). Items drawing most support, though far from unanimous, were:

17.	Gives students better selection of courses	(60%)
16.	Allow students to graduate sooner	(55%)
19.	Encourage to graduate before quitting	(54%)
2.	Make better use of buildings	(51%)

Four other items received nearly as much interest:

6.	Have complete program in summer	(49%)
9.	Provide a program suited to each	(48%)
3.	Up date school studies	(44%)
18.	Reach individual interests	(42%)

Again, the item "public wanted the four-quarter plan" received little attention (9%). Other suggested reasons with low support included:

No item received fewer than 20 per cent checks and items 3, 4, 9, 12, and 14 were in the 40's.

3.	Credit for extra curriculars	(44%)
4.	Enrichment opportunities increased	(48%)
9.	Courses better matched to abilities	(47%)
12.	Able to maintain interest	(47%)
14.	Teachers assigned by special skills	(45%)

Approximately 8 per cent of the respondents listed additional changes.

- Personal Feelings

All three items--way it is working, personal opinion, and effect on students--received strong positive ratings (80, 69, and 62%). Some 10 per cent failed to respond to each.

13.	Employ some teachers on part-time basis	(06%)
14.	Employ people in community for part-time teaching	(08%)
15.	Be first in U. S. to have the plan	(09%)

If parents felt there was an overwhelming reason for the change, it was not accurately elicited.

- Advantages

Parents thought the greatest advantage was bettering the chances to take subjects failed (74%). A rank ordering of advantages receiving more than 35 per cent support follows:

2.	Better chance to take subjects failed	(74%)
10.	Chance to graduate earlier	(58%)
3.	More opportunity for advanced courses	(57%)
15.	Better use of buildings	(49%)
1.	Better subject choice	(47%)
19.	More students can get work experience	(39%)
4.	More individual attention for students	(38%)
9.	Development of new courses and materials	(37%)
5.	More courses offered (depth, breadth)	(36%)

State financial support for summer school (19%) and fewer prerequisites (14%, item 6) were seen least often as advantages.

- Disadvantages

No major agreement was apparent on disadvantages. No reason received majority consideration and more "others" were listed than in other parts of the questionnaire. However, the items receiving substantial support are:

1.	Lack of community understanding	(46%)
2.	Student attitudes toward plan	(40%)
3.	Lack of student understanding	(40%)
5.	Possible need for more financial support	(37%)

Other possible disadvantages listed by parents included:

Schools too hot, not air-conditioned
Vacation and family plans interferred with
Tax money spent for summer when my kids don't attend
Students change teachers too often
Too much work for students and teachers

Personal Feelings

This section asked parents to identify their attitude toward the "Way the Four-Quarter School Year is Working," the "Plan Itself," and its "Effect on Students."

Seventy per cent of responding parents felt the four-quarter was working well (20%) or working but had problems to work out (50%). Fifty-seven per cent (items 2 and 3) felt problems had to be worked out. Only 4 per cent stated it was not working and could not work.

Seventy-three per cent reported favoring the plan very much (50%) or a little (23%). Only 9 per cent reported direct opposition.

Fifty-eight per cent saw the four-quarter as a great help to students (23%) or of some help (35%). Twenty-three per cent felt it had made no difference (14%) or caused problems (9%).

Sources of Information

The greatest source of information reported was the students (63%). Newspapers were second in importance (50%). Other items were rated as follows:

6.	Talking with other people	(45%)
4.	PTA meetings	(32%)
8.	Notes or material from school	(28%)
3.	Television	(27%)
2.	Radio	(18%)
5.	Civic group meetings	(05%)

Teachers were another source listed by several in the open-ended responses.

More parents felt that they had a "little" information (41%) rather than being fully informed (10%), "fairly well informed" (40%), or having "no information" (10%).

teachers

Part of the intent of the study was to elicit from teachers their reactions regarding the four-quarter school year. Teachers are important as a source on what has taken place in the schools and in relation to their understanding of the reasons for the change to the four-quarter system. Their views as to the advantages and disadvantages of the system are also important. A questionnaire was sent to a large number of teachers in four of the metro Atlanta systems. The questionnaires were distributed through the school principals who were asked to select a sample of teachers from their schools with the one request that all subject areas be represented. (The Instrument and responses percentages appear in the Appendix.)

- Possible Reasons

The first section of the questionnaire asked for responses on a list of items which are possible reasons for implementing the four-quarter school year. Some questions are related to the effect of the educational program and the students. The items* listed below indicate that teachers expected the four-quarter school year to aid in providing improvements which would benefit students, and would improve the educational program. The figure in parentheses is the percentage of teachers who responded that the item was a reason.

9.	Better structured for individual students	(77%)
19.	Better able to meet student interest	(68%)
20.	Wider selection of courses	(75%)
6.	Full school program in summer	(64%)
18.	Earlier graduation	(57%)
21.	Reduce number of dropouts	(54%)
1.	Provide students meaningful activity	(54%)
3.	Facilitate curriculum revision	(45%)

Reasons listed related to administrative aspects of change and to matters involving school personnel of most importance involve the utilization of schools year-round and the special abilities of staff members. Expenditures of money was not rated as a major factor.

2.	Full use of school buildings	(85%)
14.	Utilize special abilities	(50%)
4.	Provide year-round employment	(19%)
15.	Allow part-time employment	(17%)
7.	Allow a savings in money	(13%)
23.	Pet project of the administration	(12%)

Teachers checked use of buildings as the most likely reason for the change but focused interest on program and student considerations.

. Possible Advantages

In the second section of the questionnaire, the teachers responded to a list of suggested advantages offered by the four-quarter system. The scale required that answers be strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree. However, responses are simply reported as percentages of agreement. Those rated most often indicated that teachers expected improvements in selection of courses and improvements in the courses themselves.

12.	Earlier graduation possible	(85%)
24.	Failures are for a quarter, not a year	(85%)
11.	Development of new courses and course guides	(78%)
1.	Greater course selection for student	(74%)
3.	Improved opportunity for remedial work	(73%)
20.	Reevaluation of course offerings	(73%)
13.	Shorter time elements helps students retain interest	(66%)
7.	Prerequisite courses reduced	(49%)
4.	More individual attention	(41%)
21.	Removal of unnecessary and irrelevant courses	(23%)

Courses might be re-evaluated and added to, but there was not too much interest in elimination of courses.

Several items related to administrative concerns are worthy of note. These show a high expectancy for better utilization of talent and equipment; the sample teachers definitely view full year employment as an advantage.

18.	Building utilized to greater extent	(89%)
16.	Teachers employed for full calendar year	(81%)
17.	Teacher special abilities better utilized	(65%)

Teachers rated advantages with greater strength than any of the other groups surveyed. Again, as in Reasons for Change, they focused attention on building use and program considerations.

. Possible Disadvantages

As in the preceding section, teachers were asked to respond using a four-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. However, responses are simply reported as percentages of agreement. Of the thirteen possible disadvantages listed, responses indicate that only five are seen as potentially significant. Two are related to administrative concerns; two are related to teacher work load.

2.	More registration procedures	(76%)
3.	Lack of community understanding	(69%)
1.	Additional texts required	(61%)
8.	Increase in student records	(58%)
10.	Increased number of teacher preparations	(49%)

Lack of community understanding is thought to be of considerable importance (69%).

. Possible Changes

In the fourth section of the teacher questionnaire, that which asks for responses related to the changes which may have occurred in the schools, the significant responses were noted in the areas of school program and the students' relation to it. It may be assumed from the responses that, indeed, the educational program was re-written, that students now have a better selection, that it has encouraged student interest, but that there has been a lag in the student feeling the impact of the new curriculum.

23.	Failures were limited to one quarter	(77%)
3.	Student reporting periods changed	(70%)
7.	Courses were re-written to fit a quarter	(70%)
15.	More opportunities for enrichment courses	(60%)
13.	New courses written for quarters	(58%)
10.	Greater choice of courses	(57%)
21.	Student chance to select courses of interest	(53%)
20.	Student interest better maintained	(52%)

Changes receiving substantial support though not majority dealt with courses:

24.	Education program better suited to needs of individual student	(41%)
22.	Teacher assigned to courses according to special skills	(40%)
17.	Reduced number of prerequisite courses	(40%)
8.	Courses better matched to student abilities	(39%)

Teachers did not report a great likelihood of additional individual attention for students.

16.	Students received more individual attention from teachers	(22%)

Personal Feelings

The last section of the teacher questionnaire asked for responses which would give the general attitude of teachers toward the four-quarter school year in operation. The first time asked how the system was working, the second asked for the teacher's personal opinion, and the third asked what effect the system appeared to have on students. Responses on all three items were overwhelmingly positive.

Eighty-one per cent of the teachers responded that the system was working well (11%) or working but with problems that needed attention (70%). Eighty-one per cent reported there were problems to be worked out, but that the system was working (70%) or could work (11%). Only 2 per cent reported that the system was not working and could not work.

Eighty-three per cent favored the system with 61 per cent being very much in favor of it and 22 per cent favoring it a little. Only 8 per cent expressed opposition to it.

The effect the system had on students drew the least support, but 72% felt that it had given help. Eighteen per cent saw it as having no effect (10%) or as a source of problems (8%).

principals

Seventeen completed professional questionnaires were received from principals who represented a broad sample of metro Atlanta secondary schools. A comparative study of their responses to the instrument with those of the teachers reveals that principals and teachers were in basic agreement. Exceptions are discussed in the following paragraph.

Reasons

Although principals and teachers agreed that revisions in the curriculum and the course offerings were a major reason for changing to the four-quarter school year, they disagreed on the change facilitating the revisions. Principals also reported the limiting of student failures and reduction of the dripout rate to be of greater importance. Teachers were divided on the use of special abilities of teachers and on earlier graduation of students, whereas principals reported both to be of little consideration.

Item		Principals	Teachers
3	Facilitate curriculum revision	100%	45%
13	Limit failure to a quarter	90	57
21	Reduce dropout rate	90	54
14	Use of special abilities	30	50
15	Allow earlier graduation	10	57

Changes

Greater differences are evident in the responses made to changes, with disagreement on 12 of the 25 items. The greatest differences exist where educational programs are concerned, followed by administrative matters and its effect on students.

Item		Principals	Teachers
1	Greater involvement of staff	100%	55%
19	Use of more resource books	100	38
25	More opportunity for remedial work	100	47
10	Greater choice of courses	90	57
15	More opportunities for enrichment courses	90	60
17	Reduced prerequisite courses	90	40
21	Opportunity to select courses by interest	90	53
24	Better suited to student needs	90	41
9	More textbooks used	80	28
22	Teachers assigned by skills	80	40
8	Courses matched student's abilities	70	39
20	Interest maintained better	70	52

- Advantages

Principals and teachers showed a difference of opinion on nine of the twenty-six items listed in the advantages section. Disagreement seemed to center on deletions from the course offerings and the impact of the program on students.

Item		Principals	Teachers
5	Greater number of courses offered	100%	69%
13	Interest level more easily retained	90	66
2	Equal credit for subject areas	80	60
7	Prerequisite to courses eliminated	80	49
8	Increased opportunity for counseling by teachers	60	40
21	Unnecessary and irrelevant courses removed	60	23
22	Teachers attend graduate school any quarter	40	61
25	Part-time employment for special skills	40	55
26	Reduced number of students searching for part-time employment	30	63

- Disadvantages

There were three points of disagreement, possibly explained by the extent of contact each group has with the classroom and with the public.

Item		Principals	Teachers
1	Need for additional textbooks	80%	61%
9	Parental attitude toward the plan	60	31
3	Lack of community understanding	50	69

- Personal Feelings

Principals' responses were similar to teachers' responses except they were totally positive. All reported to be very much in favor of the four-quarter school year. Thirty per cent reported the system to be working well, while the remaining 70 per cent agreed but felt that problems existed. Sixty per cent reported the effect on students to be of great help, while the remaining 40 per cent said it had given some help.

- Factual Data

In addition to their response to the professional questionnaire, principals also supplied a breakdown of student enrollment during the first three quarters of the school year 1968-1969. The courses were divided into categories according to the changes which had been made. The categories are:

1. Revised Time Courses. These courses are essentially the same courses taught under the semester system. The content remains the same; only the matter of time has been altered by dividing two courses into three. The courses may be parts of larger, more general courses previously offered.

2. Improved Courses. These courses are based directly on courses previously taught on a semester basis, but in addition to changing the time schedule, new elements have also been added which would change the quality of the course. This kind of change would affect control, methodology, sequence, etc.

3. New Courses. Any courses which were added to the catalog of offerings at the time of the change to four-quarter will fall in this category. These courses may be very specialized in nature. An example of such a course would be Modern Drama in the English series, an advanced course designed to take advantage of a teacher's expertise in the area.

The enrollment figures as reported by the principals are displayed in Figure 3. These figures show that the largest proportion of students, nearly one-half, were enrolled in courses categorized as "Improved," those which present a change in the content of courses previously offered as well as a time change. A little more than one-third of the courses offered were essentially changes in the time element and about the same proportion of students enrolled in the courses. New courses, those assumed to be more specialized in nature and representing new and different approaches, accounted for a little more than 10 per cent of the course offerings and a little less than 10 per cent of the total enrollment.

SUMMARY OF COURSES AND ENROLLMENTS*

Subject Areas	Number of Revised Time Courses and the approximate total enrollment	Number of Improved Courses and the approximate total enrollment	Number of New Courses and the approximate total enrollment
English	36-3786	123-12,171	32-2169
Fine Arts	72-4329	50-1972	30-809
Foreign Language	88-2911	60-1252	10-192
Math	97-4909	112-7136	29-1291
Science	38-3016	91-6818	15-506
Social Studies	22-3358	90-1077	24-1547
Industrial Arts, Business, Vocational	167-8387	158-4164	31-1041
Other	71-5706	95-4904	56-1563
Total	591-36,402	789-49,187	227-9118

*Number of courses, dash (—), and student enrollment.

Figure 3

INTERVIEWS community influentials

A determination of knowledge and attitude on the part of community influentials was attempted through personal interview techniques. Procedures selected for the influentials' survey included the development of an interview guide, selection and training of interviewers, identification of interviewees through a nomination procedure,* and personal interviews. The data were summarized and synthesized from individual interview reports. Seven** of the eight metro school systems participated in this survey.

In the process of identifying influentials, 88 interviews were conducted. The interviews ranged from 15 minutes to one hour with most lasting between 30 and 45 minutes. Of the 88 persons interviewed, 61 were named a sufficient number of times to be considered influentials within the adopted procedures. Information gathered in these 61 interviews is the basis for this section.

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR INFLUENTIALS

1. Important recent issues in your community?
2. People you consider influential in your community?
3. Why the change to a four-quarter organization?
4. Disadvantages of four-quarter organization?
5. Your attitude toward four-quarter plan?
6. State of implementation in your school system?
7. Source of your information?

Figure 4

"Important recent issues" was used as a warm-up exercise; item 2 on influentials produced the nomination lists. Other questions related directly to the concern—what do you know about the four-quarter school year and how do you feel about it?

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*Superintendents of cooperating systems named several (5 or 6) influentials—people affecting policy and responsible for "action" on the community level, representing various occupational areas and the community geographically. As these nominees were interviewed, additional names were solicited. Individuals named several times were included in the interview sample.

**Marietta City, Gwinnett County, DeKalb County, Decatur City, Cobb County, Clayton County, and Atlanta City.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES Reported By COMMUNITY INFLUENTIALS

ADVANTAGES

Items Reported	Number of Times Reported: Top Influentials	Other Influentials
A. Effect on Students		
1. Keep them busy during the summer	16	9
2. Better way to spend summer	10	7
3. Allow earlier graduation	9	9
4. Graduate and enter college any time of year	2	1
5. Limit failure to one quarter	10	4
6. Encourage graduation by all	0	
7. Reach individual interest	4	5
8. Improve chances to make up failures	2	2
9. Accommodate vacations better	7	6
10. Chance for employment at various times of year	12	13
11. Continuous education for mobile students	3	0
12. Lower pupil-teacher ratio	2	0
13. Other random effects	11	11
Sub-Total	88	67
B. Effect on Educational Program		
1. Better subject choices	11	14
2. Suited to each student	4	1
3. More opportunity for advanced work	6	3
4. Less time in courses failed	7	3
5. More flexible program	3	4
6. Development of new courses and material	2	2
7. Enriched, better rounded, more up-to-date, improved quality curriculum	1	10
8. Complete program available in summer	0	1
9. Shorter time and less chance for boredom	3	2
10. More courses offered in each subject area	4	3
11. Help with remedial work	3	0
12. Other random effects	4	8
Sub-Total	48	51
C. Effect on School Financing		
1. Make better use of buildings	28	28
2. Save schools and taxpayers' money	5	5
3. Aid in having facilities for increasing population	1	3
4. State support for summer quarter	2	1
5. Other random effects	3	3
Sub-Total	39	40
D. Effect on Teacher and Other Professional Personnel		
1. Allow year-round employment and skills	17	22
2. Make better use of special knowledge and skills	2	4
3. Raise salaries	4	3
4. Allow to carry on educational studies	3	5
5. Help improve teacher performance	3	2
6. Other random effects	3	3
Sub-Total	32	39
TOTAL	207	197
E. No Advantages	1	0

DISADVANTAGES

Items Reported	Number of Responses: Top Influentials	Other Influentials
A. Effect on Students		
1. Enter college too soon	3	3
2. Causes problems at vacation time	1	0
3. Should be left alone in summer	4	1
4. Negative attitude	1	2
5. Random other effects	4	5
Sub-Total	13	10
B. Effect on Community		
1. Negative attitude	3	4
2. Difficult to accept changes	2	3
3. Vacation time upset	1	4
4. Lack of understanding or information	3	1
5. Random other effects	0	4
Sub-Total	9	16
C. Possible Need for More Financial Support		
1. Will require more funds	8	6
2. Air conditioning of buildings	4	4
3. Require additional state funds	0	1
4. Random other effects	1	1
Sub-Total	13	12
D. Professional Matters		
1. Difficulty for teachers to continue education	2	1
2. Teacher opposition	1	0
3. Administrative problems	2	2
4. Difficulty in securing personnel	1	2
5. Random other effects	1	4
Sub-Total	7	9
TOTAL	42	47
E. No Disadvantages	6	9

Figure 5

Of the 61 influentials included in the sample, 55 reported they were in favor of the implementation of the four-quarter school year. Five were opposed: two primarily because of the belief that students would be assigned to quarters or required to attend all four quarters; two were opposed because they felt that other educational changes would accomplish more significant improvements; and one saw the change as an attempt to give the appearance of improvement where, in fact, none had occurred.

Figure 5 lists the responses classified as advantages or disadvantages. Advantages cited most often included:

- School buildings would be used all year.
- Year round employment of teachers with resulting additional income.
- Students would be busy in summers and off the streets.
- Students could select quarter to be off when temporary jobs were available.
- Course failures would be limited to one quarter and easier to make up.
- Possibility of early graduation.

Disadvantages, though less frequently listed, included:

- Need for greater financial support to finance the summer program and air condition buildings.
- Concern about teachers' continuation of their own education.
- Additional teachers needed.
- Limiting of student "off" time—time they would have on their own.
- Felt would be negative reaction to four-quarter by students.

Influentials throughout the metro area cited similar advantages. However, disadvantages clustered with influentials, for example, in three systems registering concern about the financial aspects; individuals expressing concern over students not having any free time were in two other systems.

Figure illustrates that the top influentials, those named by nearly everyone as an influential, demonstrated a primary interest in practical, concrete results. They also mentioned the opportunity to select more advanced courses, and a small number thought the system would save money. Others identified as influential, but to a lesser degree, were in agreement with these advantages, but showed a stronger tendency to cite advantages more closely related to the educational program and how students would fit into it. Such advantages as an improved program, more courses to select from, and a better rounded program were mentioned by several.

In general, persons interviewed tended to answer with advantages when asked about reasons for the changes. They list relatively few disadvantages—in fact, the largest single response to that question was "none." Influentials seemed least informed and gave their most general answers when asked about the state of implementation. Several stated that the school systems had not kept the public sufficiently informed. There was virtually unanimous agreement that decisions regarding the implementation of the four-quarter school year would be left to the respective boards of education and the superintendents in each of the systems.

The influentials reported that they received their information through the newspapers, talks with school personnel and other individuals, and various kinds of meetings. The meetings were sometimes school related, but also were civic or business in nature. Influentials in different school systems tended to show differences in sources of their information: in two systems they reported their information came from school personnel; in another area very few reported having received information from any source but had reached opinions on their own.

From the interview results it does appear that the "top" influentials are the least informed of the influential group related to the four-quarter effort, although very few influentials could be accused of having too much information. They are more interested in concrete results than in philosophical considerations. Those who were somewhat less influential were better informed and are more interested in what the program offers and in how the students fit into the educational program. The lack of information on the part of many of those interviewed suggests a need to identify the influential persons in a school community and direct an information program at them.

RETROSPECT

The report has presented the Four-Quarter School Year in metro Atlanta both in historical and local perspective. While the study's prime purpose was the development of procedures and instruments to be used in a comprehensive examination of the four-quarter, the results of the exploratory study have been synthesized and presented in the narrative and in the Appendix. Therefore, it must be read as the results of an exploratory study.

The evidence indicates that strong support exists in all groups—superintendents and Steering Committee, students, parents, teachers, principals, and community influentials. There is basic agreement on the reasons for change, possible advantages, possible disadvantages and perceived changes, and the state of implementation. (Rank order of items varied but emphasis generally was on the same group of items.) The most consistent criticism related to a lack of information and a feeling of too little understanding.

People support the four-quarter plan on the basis o curriculum concerns, increased flexibility, effects on students and maximum benefi from personnel and buildings. They do support the plan as a way of efficiently usi g human resources and physical facilities.

Visible signs of the four-quarter would likely include organizational facets such as quarterly marking periods, records, registrations, and student exposure to more teachers during the year; curricular considerations such as new courses and new course guides, added reliance on paperbacks and sets of texts, horizontal and vertical extension of alternatives, and less emphasis on prerequisites and sequence; and financial factors such as partial or total support (tuition-free) for summer programs.

This report serves as a prelude to a complete study and report of the four-quarter school year in metropolitan Atlanta.

APPENDIX

The student, parent, and professional questionnaires appear in the Appendix. The response figures which are quoted are percentages of agreement for those items which required rating. The percentages for those items which required a simple response or absence of response reflect the number of responses received.

STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE

REASONS FOR THE CHANGE TO THE FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

Some of the reasons given for the change to this new school plan (four-quarter school year) are written below. Please check beside those that you think were the reasons for making the change.

Example

✓ 1. Have a better school plan.

22% 1. Keep students busy during the summer.
52% 2. Make better use of school buildings during the summer.
52% 3. Make the school studies more up to date.
27% 4. Allow teachers to work all year.
25% 5. Get state tax money for summer school.
68% 6. Have a complete school program in the summer.
26% 7. Save schools and taxpayers money.
43% 8. Have a smaller number of students in school at any one time.
63% 9. Provide a school program that is suited to each student.
11% 10. The public wanted the four-quarter plan.
43% 11. Limit student failure to one quarter.
26% 12. Make better use of the special knowledge of teachers.
7% 13. Employ some teachers to work only part of the day.
3% 14. Employ people in the community for part-time teaching.
10% 15. Be the first in the United States to have a four-quarter plan.
72% 16. Allow students to graduate sooner (acceleration).
75% 17. Give students better selection of courses.
53% 18. Reach individual interests of students.
58% 19. Encourage students to graduate before quitting school.
39% 20. Allow students to graduate and enter college at any time during the school year.
___ 21. Please give any other reasons you think the four-quarter year was begun.

POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES OF THE FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

A list of possible advantages of the four-quarter school year appears below. Based on your personal opinion and experience, please rate these possible advantages by the following scale.

1. I strongly agree with this statement.
2. I agree with this statement.
3. I disagree with this statement.
4. I strongly disagree with this statement.

A blank indicates no opinion or insufficient information on which to base opinion.

INDICATE YOUR RATING BY CIRCLING THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER IN THE LEFT-HAND MARGIN.

Example

1 (2) 3 4 1. The four-quarter school year corresponds with most college schedules.

77% 1 2 3 4 1. Greater choice of courses.
79% 1 2 3 4 2. Better chance to make-up a failure.
62% 1 2 3 4 3. Better opportunity to take remedial work.
75% 1 2 3 4 4. More opportunity to take courses for enrichment.
68% 1 2 3 4 5. More new courses offered in each subject area.
45% 1 2 3 4 6. More individual attention given to each student.
41% 1 2 3 4 7. Number of courses which must be taken in specific order is reduced (those having pre-requisites).
47% 1 2 3 4 8. Opportunity to be counseled more by teachers.
84% 1 2 3 4 9. Can complete requirements and graduate earlier.
58% 1 2 3 4 10. Able to maintain interest during the shorter periods of time (quarters).
62% 1 2 3 4 11. Can graduate and enter college or begin working at any time during the school year.
65% 1 2 3 4 12. Opportunity of another productive way of spending the summer.
77% 1 2 3 4 13. Course failure is for one quarter rather than for a whole year.
69% 1 2 3 4 14. Chances for part-time employment improved because of availability at various times of the year.
73% 1 2 3 4 15. Educational program can be better suited to what each student needs.
65% 1 2 3 4 16. Educational program is better suited to the interests of each student.
71% 1 2 3 4 17. Teachers can be assigned to courses according to their special skills and knowledge.
1 2 3 4 18. Please list and rate any advantages you would like to add. (Use back of sheet.)

POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES OF THE FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

A list of possible disadvantages of the four-quarter school year appears below. Based on your personal opinion and experiences, please rate these possible disadvantages by the following scale.

1. I strongly agree with this statement.
2. I agree with this statement.
3. I disagree with this statement.
4. I strongly disagree with this statement.

A blank indicates no opinion or insufficient information on which to base an opinion.

INDICATE YOUR RATING BY CIRCLING THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER IN THE LEFT-HAND MARGIN.

Example

1 (2) 3 4 1. Mistaken idea that students are required to attend all four quarters.

38% 1 2 3 4 1. Too many registration procedures.
63% 1 2 3 4 2. Too little student understanding of the four-quarter plan.
11% 1 2 3 4 3. Too many courses available.
26% 1 2 3 4 4. Subjects broken into too many small sections.
15% 1 2 3 4 5. Period of time for each quarter too short.
25% 1 2 3 4 6. Teachers' poor attitudes toward the four-quarter plan.
1 2 3 4 7. Please list and rate any additional disadvantages. (Use back of sheet.)

POSSIBLE CHANGES CAUSED BY THE FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

The following list of statements represents changes which might have occurred in your school as a result of the four-quarter school year. Please place a check beside those statements which describe the changes which took place in your school.

Example

✓ 1. More courses containing new content were offered.

81% 1. Report cards came out at a different time.
60% 2. Better chances to make up failures.
44% 3. Some extra-curricular activities were given course credit.
48% 4. More opportunities to take enrichment courses.
28% 5. Students re-registered every quarter.
22% 6. Students received more individual attention from teachers.
28% 7. Study halls were eliminated.
33% 8. The number of courses which must be taken in specific order was reduced (those requiring pre-requisites).

47% 9. Courses were better matched to students' abilities.
26% 10. Students received more counseling from teachers.
27% 11. More resource books were used in each subject.
47% 12. Students were able to maintain interest during the shorter grading periods.
59% 13. Greater opportunity for students to select courses which they wanted to take.
45% 14. Teachers were assigned to courses according to their special skills and knowledge.
36% 15. Report cards were changed to give a better description of the student's performance in courses.
57% 16. Fourth quarter provides another productive way of spending the summer.
61% 17. Failures were limited to one quarter.
39% 18. Educational program was better suited to what each student needed.
50% 19. Students were able to select courses according to their interests.
38% 20. More opportunities to take remedial work.
___ 21. Please list any other changes which occurred.

PERSONAL FEELINGS ABOUT THE FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

Based on your own experience and knowledge about the four-quarter school year, check the statement which best describes your feelings about

The Way the Four-Quarter School Year is Working

19% 1. It is working well.
61% 2. It is working, but there are still many problems.
8% 3. It is not working, but could if the problems can be worked out.
3% 4. It is not working and cannot work.

Your Personal Opinion

44% 1. I am very much in favor of it.
25% 2. I favor it a little.
16% 3. I do not care whether we have it or do not have it.
5% 4. I am opposed to it.

Its Effect on Students

23% 1. It has been a great help.
39% 2. It has given some help.
17% 3. It has made no difference.
8% 4. It has caused problems.

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE

REASONS FOR CHANGE TO FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

Some of the reasons given for the change to this new school plan (four-quarter school year) are written below. Please place a check beside those that you think were the reasons for making the change.

Example

✓ 1. Have a better school plan.

34% 1. Keep students busy during the summer.
51% 2. Make better use of school buildings during the summer.
44% 3. Make the school studies more up to date.
24% 4. Allow teachers to work all year.
18% 5. Get state tax money for summer school.
49% 6. Have a complete school program in the summer.
25% 7. Save schools and taxpayers money.
39% 8. Have a smaller number of students in school at any one time.
48% 9. Provide a school program that is suited to each student.
9% 10. The public wanted the four-quarter plan.
36% 11. Limit student failure to one quarter.
26% 12. Make better use of the special knowledge of teachers.
6% 13. Employ some teachers to work only part of the day.
8% 14. Employ people in the community for part-time teaching.
2% 15. Be the first in the U. S. to have a four-quarter plan.
55% 16. Allow students to graduate sooner.
60% 17. Give students better selection of courses.
42% 18. Reach the individual interests of students.
54% 19. Encourage students to graduate before quitting school.
30% 20. Allow students to graduate and enter college at any time during the school year.
___ 21. Please give any other reasons you think the four-quarter year was begun.

ADVANTAGES OF FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

Some of the possible advantages of the four-quarter school year are given below. Please place a check beside those you feel are advantages.

Example

✓ 1. Students' preference for summer school.

47% 1. Better subject choices.
74% 2. Better chances for students to take subjects failed.
57% 3. More opportunity for advanced courses.
38% 4. More individual attention for each student.
36% 5. More courses offered in each subject area.
14% 6. Fewer courses that must be taken in a special order (one before the other).

24% 7. Increased student counseling by teachers.
25% 8. Same credit for all subjects.
37% 9. Development of new courses and materials.
58% 10. Chance to graduate earlier.
24% 11. Less chance for boredom because of shorter time periods.
31% 12. Chance for student graduation and college entrance at any time during school year.
28% 13. Year round teacher employment.
30% 14. Better use of teachers' special knowledge.
49% 15. Better use of buildings.
36% 16. Better ways for students to spend summers.
19% 17. State financial support for summer school.
28% 18. Less time in failing subjects.
39% 19. Chance for more students to get work experience by working at various times of the year.
22% 20. Use of people with special abilities as part-time teachers.
___ 21. Please add any advantages you think the four-quarter school year might have.

DISADVANTAGES OF FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

Some of the possible disadvantages of the four-quarter school year are written below. Please place a check beside those that you feel are disadvantages.

Example

✓ 1. Mistaken idea that students are required to attend all four quarters.

46% 1. Lack of community understanding.
40% 2. Student attitude toward plan.
40% 3. Lack of student understanding.
21% 4. Student choices made difficult by increased number of courses.
37% 5. Possible need for more financial support.
___ 6. Please list any other possible disadvantages.

PERSONAL FEELINGS ABOUT FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

Based on your own experience and knowledge about the four-quarter school year, check the statement which best describes your feelings about

The Way the Four-Quarter School Year is Working

20% 1. It is working well.
50% 2. It is working, but there are many problems to work out.
7% 3. It is not working, but could if the problems can be worked out.
4% 4. It is not working and cannot work.

Your Personal Opinion

50% 1. I am very much in favor of it.
23% 2. I favor it a little.
11% 3. I do not care whether we have it or do not have it.
9% 4. I am opposed to it.

Its Effect on Students

23% 1. It has been a great help.
35% 2. It has given some help.
14% 3. It has made no difference.
9% 4. It has caused problems.

INFORMATION ABOUT FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

Sources

Please place a check beside your sources of information about the four-quarter school year.

50% 1. Newspapers
18% 2. Radio
27% 3. Television
32% 4. P.T.A. Meetings
5% 5. Civic Group Meetings
45% 6. Talking with other people
63% 7. Students
28% 8. Notes or materials from school
___ 9. Please list other sources.

Please check the statement which best describes how well informed you are about the four-quarter school year.

10% 1. I feel fully informed.
40% 2. I feel fairly well informed.
41% 3. I have a little information.
8% 4. I have no information.

PROFESSIONAL QUESTIONNAIRE

REASONS FOR THE CHANGE TO THE FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

The following is a list of possible reasons for the change to the four-quarter schoc plan. Please indicate by a check those which you think were reasons for making the change to the four-quarter school year.

Example

✓ 1. Have a better school plan.

54% 1. Reduce the number of idle students during the summer period.
85% 2. Provide greater utilization of school buildings.
45% 3. Facilitate curriculum revision.
19% 4. Provide year-round employment for teachers.
21% 5. Gain State financing for summer programs.
44% 6. Offer a complete school in the summer.
13% 7. Save money.
41% 8. Reduce the number of students in school at any one time.
77% 9. Provide a program that will better fit individual students.
20% 10. Meet community demands for the adoption of the four-quarter plan.
39% 11. Students can find employment better when competing over four quarters rather than just the summer.
5% 12. A change was needed and the public is familiar with the quarter concept.
57% 13. Limit student failure to a quarter period rather than for the whole year.
50% 14. Use the special abilities of teachers to a greater extent.
17% 15. Allow qualified professionals to teach for part of the school day.
16% 16. Utilize people in the community with special abilities in part-time teaching.
38% 17. Enable the Atlanta area to become a national educational leader by having a four-quarter plan.
67% 18. Allow students to graduate sooner.
76% 19. Provide a wider selection of course offerings.
68% 20. Improve the ability of schools to meet student interest.
57% 21. Reduce the number of drop-outs.
48% 22. Allow students to graduate and enter college or full-time employment at any time during the school year.
12% 23. Implement a pet project of the administration.
___ 24. Any other reasons you may think the four-quarter plan was begun.

POSSIBLE ADVANTAGES OF THE FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

A list of possible advantages of the four-quarter school year appears below. Based on your personal opinion and experiences, please rate these possible advantages by the following scale.

1. I strongly agree with this statement.
2. I agree with this statement.
3. I disagree with this statement.
4. I disagree strongly with this statement.

A blank indicates no opinion or insufficient information on which to base opinion.

Example

1 (2) 3 4 1. The four-quarter school year corresponds with most college schedules.

INDICATE YOUR RATING BY CIRCLING THE APPROPRIATE NUMBER IN THE LEFT-HAND MARGIN.

74% 1 2 3 4 1. Students have a greater choice of courses.
60% 1 2 3 4 2. Subject areas are equally dignified by receiving the same credit.
73% 1 2 3 4 3. Students have a greater opportunity for remedial courses.
41% 1 2 3 4 4. More individual attention is given to each student.
69% 1 2 3 4 5. Greater number of courses offered in each subject area.
76% 1 2 3 4 6. Students have a greater opportunity for enrichment courses.
49% 1 2 3 4 7. Number of courses with prerequisites is reduced.
40% 1 2 3 4 8. Increased opportunity for student counseling by teachers.
71% 1 2 3 4 9. Each subject is given an equal amount of credit.
16% 1 2 3 4 10. Four-quarter plan is a concept understood by the public.
78% 1 2 3 4 11. Opportunity for development of new courses and new course guides.
85% 1 2 3 4 12. Opportunity available for earlier completion of requirements and graduation.
66% 1 2 3 4 13. Student interest level more easily retained in the shorter period of time in the quarter.
74% 1 2 3 4 14. Opportunity available for students to graduate and enter college or begin full-time employment at any time during the school year.
65% 1 2 3 4 15. Allow teachers the freedom to take any quarter off to earn college credit or for personal enrichment.
91% 1 2 3 4 16. Teachers may be employed for a full calendar year.
66% 1 2 3 4 17. Greater opportunity to better utilize the special abilities of teachers.
89% 1 2 3 4 18. Greater utilization of buildings.
82% 1 2 3 4 19. Another productive way for students to spend their summer.
73% 1 2 3 4 20. Forces all subject fields to evaluate their course offerings.
25% 1 2 3 4 21. Unnecessary and irrelevant courses have been removed from the curriculum.
61% 1 2 3 4 22. Teachers can attend graduate school during any quarter period.

99% 2 3 4 23. Regular course offerings in the summer qualify the schools for State financial support for that period.

85%1 2 3 4 24. Students fail for one quarter rather than the entire year.

5% 2 3 4 25. Teachers and other members of the community with special abilities may be employed on a part-time basis.

63%1 2 3 4 26. Number of students searching for part-time employment is reduced during any one quarter period.

1 2 3 4 27. List and rate any other advantages you would like to add.

POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES OF THE FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

A list of possible disadvantages of the four-quarter school year appears below. Based on your personal opinion and experience please rate these possible disadvantages by the following scale.

1. I strongly agree with this statement.
2. I agree with this statement.
3. I disagree with this statement.
4. I disagree strongly with this statement.

A blank indicates no opinion or insufficient information on which to base opinion.

61% 1 2 3 4 1. Need for additional textbooks.

76% 1 2 3 4 2. Additional number of registration procedures.

69% 1 2 3 4 3. Lack of community understanding of four-quarter plan.

31% 1 2 3 4 4. Difficulties with in-service training.

35% 1 2 3 4 5. Fragmentation of the curriculum.

42% 1 2 3 4 6. Lack of understanding on the part of students.

30% 1 2 3 4 7. Number of courses from which to choose.

58% 1 2 3 4 8. Increased record keeping.

31% 1 2 3 4 9. Parental attitude toward the four-quarter system.

49% 1 2 3 4 10. Increased preparations by teachers.

19% 1 2 3 4 11. Extensive development of intra-mural sports.

28% 1 2 3 4 12. Student attitude toward the four-quarter system.

32% 1 2 3 4 13. Short period of time in each quarter.

1 2 3 4 14. Please list and rate any additional disadvantages.

POSSIBLE CHANGES RESULTING FROM THE FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

The following list of statements represents changes which might have occurred in your school as a result of the four-quarter school year. Please place a check beside those statements which describe the changes which took place in your school.

Example

✓ 1. More courses containing new content were planned.

55% 1. Greater involvement of staff in planning and decision-making.

78% 2. Changes in the school calendar.

70% 3. Reporting periods changed.

44% 4. Some extra-curricular activities became credit courses.

54% 5. Student re-registered for courses each quarter.

30% 6. Study halls were eliminated.

70% 7. Courses were re-written to fit a quarter period of time.

39% 8. Courses were better matched to the students' abilities.

28% 9. More textbooks were used in each subject area.

57% 10. There was a greater choice of courses.

31% 11. Changes were made in the report card related to students' performance in courses.

19% 12. Courses have been tied in with community work in business and industry.

58% 13. New courses were written for the quarter period of time.

68% 14. Improved chances for students to make up failures.

60% 15. More opportunities for students to take enrichment courses.

22% 16. Students received more individual attention from teachers.

40% 17. Reduced number of prerequisite courses.

21% 18. Teachers have more opportunities to counsel students.

38% 19. More resource books were used in each subject.

62% 20. Students were better able to maintain interest during the shorter grading periods.

53% 21. Greater opportunity for students to select courses according to their interest.

40% 22. Teachers are assigned to courses according to their special skills and knowledge.

77% 23. Failures were limited to one quarter rather than for an entire year.

41% 24. Educational program was better suited to the needs of individual students.

47% 25. Students had more opportunities to take remedial courses.

___ 26. Please list any other changes which occurred.

PERSONAL FEELINGS ABOUT THE FOUR-QUARTER SCHOOL YEAR

Based on your own experience and knowledge about the four-quarter school year, check the statement which best describes what you think about

The Way the Four-Quarter School Year is Working

11% 1. It is working well.

70% 2. It is working, but there are many problems to work out.

11% 3. It is not working, but could if the problems can be worked out.

2% 4. It is not working and cannot work.

Your Personal Opinion

61% 1. I am very much in favor of it.

22% 2. I favor it a little.

5% 3. I do not care whether we have it or do not have it.

5% 4. I am opposed to it.

Its Effect on Students

18% 1. It has been a great help.

54% 2. It has given some help.

10% 3. It has made no difference.

8% 4. It has caused problems.